

**WHEREAS**, Mattie J.T. Stepanek, lived in the Rockville's King Farm neighborhood with his mother, Jeni, and was affected by a rare and fatal form of muscular dystrophy, and

**WHEREAS**, Mattie Stepanek was an American poet and advocate. At the age of 3, Mattie started to write poetry, that he referred to as his "Heartsongs," and which enabled him to cope with his disease which also affected his sister and two brothers, and

**WHEREAS**, The message contained in Mattie's "Heartsongs" touched the lives of people around the world, reaching individuals of all ages, races, nationalities, faiths, abilities, and aspirations, and

**WHEREAS**, each of Mattie's five books of poetry made the New York Times's Best Seller list; and

**WHEREAS**, after his death in on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2004, *Just Peace*, a collection of Mattie's correspondence with former President Jimmy Carter and essays on peace, was published and was awarded the Independent Publisher Gold Medal Award for the Outstanding Book of the Year for 2007 in the Peacemaker Category; and

**WHEREAS**, on June 3, 2005, the City of Rockville honored Mattie J.T. Stepanek for his remarkable contributions to his community and to people all over the world by naming its 26 acre park in the King Farm community for him. On October 18, 2008, the City of Rockville will dedicate the Mattie J.T. Stepanek park in his name; and

**WHEREAS**, On Sunday, July 13th, swim teams from around Montgomery County will participate in the second annual Heartsong Swim at the Rockville Municipal Swim Center. By swimming laps, participants will raise money that will go towards the development of a school curriculum for children that will use Mattie's writings to teach, among other things, about peaceful conflict resolution and consequences of destructive behavior, such as bullying. Proceeds will also go towards the installation and dedication of a statue of Mattie and his service dog, Micah, and the Peace Garden that will surround the statue to be located at the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Park.

**NOW THEREFORE**, the Mayor along with the Council of the City of Rockville, do hereby proclaim the week of July 7-13, 2008, as Mattie J.T. Stepanek Week in Rockville, and encourage all members of the community to recognize the many contributions of Mattie J.T. Stepanek by **thinking gently, speaking gently and living gently**, the motto by which this courageous young man lived his life.